

## *Carex circinata* C.A. Meyer

coiled sedge

Cyperaceae (Sedge Family)

Status: State Sensitive

Rank: G4S1

**General Description:** Adapted from FNA (2002): This perennial, short rhizomatous sedge grows in tufts or small dense clumps. The culms are 2 to 9-¾ in. (5 to 25 cm) high. The leaves have margins that are rolled or turned in over the upper surface. The leaves are curved and 0.5 mm wide. The spike has both female and male flowers. The scales of the female spikes are shorter to longer than the perigynia and as wide as wider than the perigynia. These scales are often covering all but the beak of the perigynium, have thin and translucent or transparent margins, are obtuse to acute. Occasionally the scales have an apex that is somewhat abruptly and sharply constricted into an elongated, sharp-pointed tip. The perigynium is 1/8 to ¼ in. (4.5 to 6 mm), has finely toothed margins, and a beak with a tip that is thin and translucent or transparent.

**Identification Tips:** *Carex circinata* is most closely related to *Carex anthoxantha*, another Sensitive species. Their growth form, leaves, and the margins of their perigynia can distinguish these species. *Carex circinata* grows in tufts or small dense clumps and it has short rhizomes, its leaves have margins that are rolled or turned in over the upper surface, and the upper edges margins of its perigynia are finely serrulate. *Carex anthoxantha* has long rhizomes, the leaves of this plant are flat, and the upper edges of its perigynia are smooth. A technical key is needed to distinguish the species.

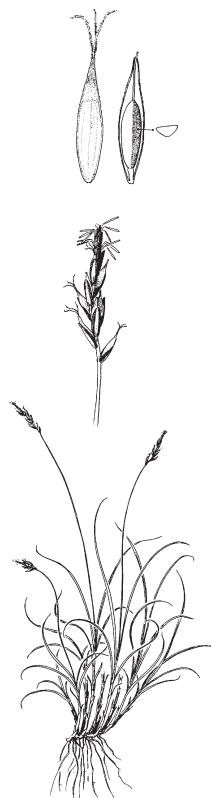
**Phenology:** In Washington *Carex circinata* was identified from June to August.

**Range:** *Carex circinata* is found in British Columbia, the Yukon, Alaska, and Washington. In Washington this species has been seen in Grays Harbor, Mason, and Jefferson counties.

**Habitat:** In Washington, *Carex circinata* has been found growing on north to northwest facing summit rocks and in wet meadows near ponds at an elevation of 3220 to 4492 ft (981 to 1369 m). Associated species include Davidson's penstemon (*Penstemon davidsonii*), Merten's sedge (*Carex mertensii*), Ross' sedge

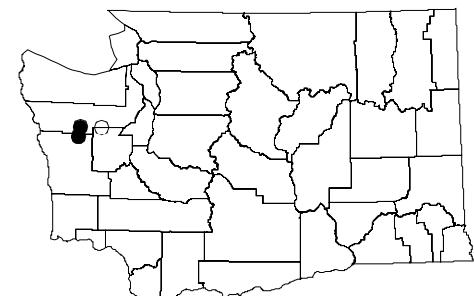
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Illustration by Jeanne R. Janish

Known distribution  
of *Carex circinata*  
in Washington



● Current (1980+)

○ Historic (older than 1980)

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(*Carex rossii*), matted saxifrage (*Saxifraga bronchialis* var. *austromontana*), spreading phlox (*Phlox diffusa*), pink mountainheath (*Phyllodoce empetriformis*), rusty lupine (*Lupinus pusillus*), Pacific silver fir (*Abies amabilis*), Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), Alaska cedar (*Chamaecyparis nootkatensis*), Sierra shootingstar (*Dodecatheon jeffreyi*), and field horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*).

**Ecology:** *Carex circinata* generally found in rocky, moist areas from mid to high elevations.

**State Status Comments:** The limited range and low number of known occurrences account for this species' status.

**Inventory Needs:** Cliffs, talus slopes, rocky outcrops and wet meadows from mid to high elevations in Grays Harbor, Mason, and Jefferson counties should be systematically surveyed for additional populations. Known occurrences should be revisited, and updated information both about habitat and individual populations should be collected.

**Threats and Management Concerns:** Definite threats have not been identified for this species. However, the small range of this taxon in Washington and the small number of known occurrences is a major concern. Any disturbance to the localized habitat such as grazing, timber harvest or recreational activities may constitute a threat.

### References:

Flora of North America Editorial Committee eds. 2002. *Flora of North America North of Mexico Volume 23: Magnoliophyta: Commelinidae (in part): Cyperaceae*. Oxford University Press, New York, NY. 608 pp.

Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, J.W. Thompson. 1969. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest Part 1: Vascular Cryptogams, Gymnosperms, and Monocotyledons*. University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA. 914 pp.